

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

April 23, 2008

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on April 23, 2008, in the Board Room of the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Richard M. Eccles, President
Mr. Frank Koziol, Vice President
Mr. Joseph R. Blasch
Ms. Irene Boyle
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis
Mr. William D. O'Connor
Dr. William H. Spitz
Mr. Ritchie Webb

ADMINISTRATORS:

Mr. Paul J. Kadri
Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise
Dr. Sandra Costanzo
Dr. Geeta A. Heble
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan

SECRETARY:

Mrs. Anita E. Walls

SOLICITOR:

Thomas Profy, IV, Esquire

OTHERS: Approximately 95 persons from the public, staff and press

Call to Order

Mr. Eccles called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Eccles requested those in attendance join in the salute to the flag.

Announcements

None.

Board Recognition

Mr. Kadri introduced Ms. Kelly Macauley, 2008 American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences Top Teacher of the Year. Mr. Kadri stated that the Neshaminy School District is pleased to announce that Kelly Macauley has been selected as the 2008 American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences Top Teacher of the Year for the program *Skills for Life Simulation*. Ms. Macauley is one of only three Family & Consumer Science Teachers nationwide to earn this distinction. Ms. Macauley will be honored at a luncheon on Saturday, June 21, 2008, at the 99th Annual Conference and Expo at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center.

Ms. Macauley stated that receiving the top teacher award from the national association is definitely an honor, however, receiving recognition here at Neshaminy School District is really much more meaningful to her. Ms. Macauley is a Neshaminy graduate, parent of three Neshaminy graduates and is very proud and happy to give recognition to the School District and Maple Point Middle School. Ms. Macauley stated that FCS teaches children very important skills in behavior that they will need later for a successful adult life. Ms. Macauley stated that she loved her job and adores the children and this makes working hard an absolute pleasure.

Student Representative Report

Ms. Heather Pine and Mr. Matt Miller provided the following student representative report:

- Girls Soccer team is 10-1 for the start of the season

- Letters of Intent were signed for college in track and field by Kevin Steinberg, Kim Malloy, Nick Defeo
- French students just returned from Quebec
- Junior class trip to Williamsburg and Washington, D.C. is this upcoming weekend
- Dancing With the Faculty and Neshaminy Idol both had good turnouts
- Dance team will be performing at Trenton Thunder on May 15th

Public Comment

Mr. Dominic Spadaccino, Langhorne, PA, advised that he was 87 yesterday. After watching the last school board meeting on T.V. he thinks that Dr. Spitz and Mr. O'Connor should resign.

Ms. Sandy Drake & Solis Basen, Langhorne, PA read the following:

"We, the united community of the Neshaminy School District, come before you, the Neshaminy School Board, tonight to demand that you begin to fulfill your duties as elected school board officials.

May we remind each of you that you serve at the pleasure of this community. You work for us. And frankly, we as a united community do not approve of the job you are doing. The public arguing and pettiness must stop. Take it behind closed doors. And let us be clear that we mean your personal differences. Back door deals and Board manipulations have no place in this district. Sitting quietly while board indiscretions occur is not an option. Your behavior as a group has become an embarrassment to the community that elected you. The board should model appropriate behavior. Students may not know the details of an issue, but they sense the tenor of the community.

"Dysfunctional school boards that are in constant conflict, meddle in minutiae and don't communicate well with each other have districts with lower test scores, fewer kids going to college and more dropouts," this according to a five state study conducted by the New England School Development Council. These results are supported by the Iowa Association of School Boards.

This Neshaminy Board has lost the confidence of the community because of 1) the attempt to micromanage the district, 2) special interest interference and 3) petty political partisanship. You as a Board and we as a community are facing many challenges that will have long term implications for all of us; the high school renovation, a new teacher contract, school closings, the alternative school placement and the redistricting or restructuring of schools.

That being said, we as a united Neshaminy community have three (3) demands that we want fulfilled by the next Board meeting of May 6, 2008.

First and foremost is our concern for the children of this community. How will the decisions that you make today better the educational experience of our students? To that end, we demand to have a two (2) and five (5) year written strategic plans presented with a ten (10) year plan to follow. This plan must utilize the information in the McKissick Report, input from your administrative staff and other FACT based information. These plans must also be presented publicly.

Second, these strategic goals must be sustainable to the entire community. There must be a written outline of accountability that is followed. Monetary goals and concerns must be clearly defined to this community as well as to the superintendent. These goals must be written and publicly presented.

Third, we demand that you publicly define the role of this school board, the role of the superintendent and the roles of the building principals. These roles must have clearly defined written goals. One of the major roles of the school board is to appoint a superintendent who is an experienced public school administrator to function as the district's chief executive to carry out the day to day decisions and policy implementations. Let Mr. Kadri do his job.

Neshaminy School District used to be the innovative leader of education in Bucks County. If you, as a board, begin to do your job, we as a united community know we can become leaders again.”

Mr. Webb advised that the Board is in agreement with most of the statements made. Mr. Webb asked that he be able to attend one of the community meetings. Mr. Webb asked for specifics on how the board was not allowing Mr. Kadri from doing his job.

Ms. Drake advised that the board continually blocks the efforts of the Superintendent and the community to try to force the issue to discuss things that are important.

Mr. Webb advised that the district has a five year plan and negotiating team.

Mr. Solis Basen, Langhorne, PA, stated that the Board needs harmony. The moment you become a school board member the political aspect needs to be discarded. You are no longer a republican or democrat. You are a school board member serving the people and children of Neshaminy School District.

Ms. Robin Gillmore, Penndel, PA, stated that the Superintendent said that the person receiving the job was the administration’s best recommendation. Why did the school board not accept the pending recommendation instead of attacking the president with no proof.

Mr. Michael Morris, Langhorne, PA, Sophomore Class President, requested a date change for the Sophomore class trip from May 25th to May 24th due to lack of attendance due to sport commitments. The trip is scheduled to go to Hershey Park.

Mr. Ron Koreck, Langhorne, PA, stated that two-thirds of the school board works hard for the district the other one-third seems to work hard at making things hard, complicated and bad. These few people drive a wedge between themselves and the rest of the school board. Mr. Koreck quoted the Courier Times “Board member, Bill Spitz called President Rick Eccles a dictator who has divided the school board.” Mr. Koreck disagrees. Mr. Koreck believes that Dr. Spitz, Mr. O’Connor and Superintendent, Paul Kadri, drove the wedge and are responsible for the divided school board. Nothing will run smooth except partisan politics. Mr. Eccles is doing a good job and has done a good job. Mr. Koreck disagrees with back door politics, witch hunts and closed door practices, and also the resignation of Mr. Eccles as school board president.

Mrs. Joan Thomas, Langhorne, PA, stated that the Courier printed that Dr. Spitz and Mr. O’Connor regretted bringing up hiring practices. That is what Executive Sessions are for. This should not occur in front of the public. It was intentionally brought up for political reasons. Mrs. Thomas feels the Board should act professionally and this should take place in Executive Session.

Mrs. Mary Durkin, Levittown, PA, stated that she agrees with Mr. Webb regarding the independent investigation from the Superintendent on down. Mrs. Durkin agrees that an Oversight or Personnel Committee is long overdue. Making accusations is one thing and having proof is another.

Mrs. Maryanne Kohler, Langhorne, PA, stated that her daughter attends Neshaminy Middle and she does not want to switch schools. She loves her school. As part of the community Mrs. Kohler would like to have a fair say as to where her daughter will attend middle school, whether it be Maple Point or Poquessing. Mrs. Kohler also stated that there was no preparation for the students. Budget issues exist, but why does it need to be about money, it needs to be about the students first. The students do not know what is going on and they were not adequately involved or counseled.

Mr. Chris Graham, Langhorne Borough, PA, stated why do the school board members have such a difficult time staying focused on the task at hand, insuring the students are receiving the best education possible. Mr. Graham felt good about the plan presented by Mr. Kadri, Dr. Muenker and Mrs. Rattigan. The educational needs of the children had finally taken priority. Mr. Graham was disturbed to hear what happened at the

school board meeting. The Board again is disgracing the Neshaminy community. Name calling, political patronage, wrongdoing, etc. are further distractions from the task at hand, educating the children. Work together towards one common goal. Represent the community's interest and educating the children is your job. This community will not stand for this behavior much longer. Stop letting the children down.

Mr. Howard Lindner, Langhorne, PA, advised that when one states the community is behind them you better know the community, from Lower South to Middletown. Mr. Lindner spoke about Mr. Eccles' history with Neshaminy. Mr. Eccles represents the people. Mr. Eccles represents this community. Mr. Eccles is responsible for unlimited comment. One of the leaders of the referendum movement and Neshaminy T.V. Mr. Eccles has gotten donations from businesses to help Neshaminy. Mr. Eccles has always been committed to Neshaminy.

Mr. Lindner noted that Mr. O'Connor was for the building of a new school and was working with the administration at the time. Mr. Lindner is aware of the letter presented at the last board meeting regarding hiring of family and friends. Mr. Lindner stated that you need a political connection. Mr. O'Connor's signs said "For people, not politics," however, that is not what he is practicing.

Mr. Lindner stated that the board needs to work together for the children and the schools. This issue should never have come up at the last meeting.

Mr. Lindner stated that he does not consider Mr. Kadri an experienced Administrator. Mr. Lindner referred back to the hiring of the administrative position dealing with discipline and splitting of the position. Mr. Lindner is concerned that Mr. Kadri has never been a teacher, never been an assistant principal or a principal. This lack of experience hurts.

Mr. Mark Shupin stated that he believes the last meeting displayed a mockery of this Board. Serious challenges face this district. Difficult times face all taxpayers. Mr. Shupin presented key objectives:

- 1) Closing of schools
- 2) Budget
- 3) Pending Negotiations

Mr. Shupin is concerned with disrespect for Board members. Board members come into this process with reasonable, idealistic expectations. What happens over time is that they become beaten down by the very system they are trying to help. Mr. Shupin commends the board members. Volunteering time and serving the community is difficult. This country is bound by due process and the constitution. Let's not turn this Board into a kangaroo court and forget the principles of respect and decency which should be applied to the proceedings. There needs to be a proper system in place to levy accusations. Governing bodies establish ethics committees. Evidence can be presented and the facts can be determined and a decision can be rendered. Politics is no place for a school board. Mr. Shupin is concerned with the timing of what occurred at the last meeting with the pending teacher negotiations. To be successful with the negotiations this Board must stay united. Failure to do so will not serve the economic interest and educational interests of the children. Mr. Shupin can document the money received by two board members from various unions. Mr. Shupin calls that pay to play. Move forward with the business at hand. Mr. Shupin asked that the audience show respect for the volunteers that serve on the board with good intentions. We cannot act as judge and jury without all the facts and a fair hearing.

Mr. Alden Thorpe, Levittown, PA, stated that no one should be attacked. Mr. Thorpe thought Mr. Eccles was asking questions so everyone could understand better. Questioning the superintendent is not usurping authority. All board members should ask questions. The closing of schools has been an issue for several years. Attacks should not be made on individual board members. What is the object. This Board needs to get done the work at hand. To get elected to the school board it costs money. Mr. Thorpe stated that if there is an issue then a fact finding committee should be hired.

Superintendent's Report

Mr. Kadri announced that it is Administrative Professionals Day and within the district there exits a spectacular staff supporting the schools. Mr. Kadri thanked Mrs. Debby Spadaccino and expressed that she is one of the finest individuals he has ever worked with. Mr. Kadri thanked everyone in the district who sits in such a capacity.

Mr. Kadri announced that Flip the Switch will take place on Friday, May 9th. Visitation of the Science classrooms at the high school will be visited. The public is invited to attend.

Mr. Kadri suggested that the Board consider moving the June Work Session and Public Meeting forward. Mr. Kadri stated that the date of the meetings would be Tuesday, June 3rd and Monday, June 16th. By moving the meetings forward it would allow the opportunity to schedule activities for staff and students to be able to close out the year in an appropriate way for buildings which may be slated for closure.

Mr. Blasch made a motion to hold the public meeting on Monday, June 16th. Mr. Koziol seconded same. The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Mr. Kadri noted that a ceremony took place for a fallen soldier and graduate of Neshaminy.

Mr. Kadri provided a report on student accomplishments.

Mr. Eccles noted that Thursday night will be the induction into the National Honor Society at the High School.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Walls presented the minutes of the March 25, 2008 and April 8, 2008 public meetings. Upon motion of Mr. Koziol and seconded by Dr. Spitz the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the March 25, 2008 and April 8, 2008 Public Meetings.

Approval of Treasurer's Report, Check Registers, Investments, and Exonerations of Personal and Per Capita Tax

Mr. Paradise presented the following for approval:

- March, 2008 Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit
- Check Register – March, 2008
- Investment Summary
- Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations – March, 2008

Mr. O'Connor moved the March, 2008 treasurer's report, subject to audit, check register, investments, and exonerations of personal and per capita tax be approved. Ms. Boyle seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit, check registers, investments and personal and per capita tax exonerations.

Bids/Budget Transfers:

Information distributed prior to the meeting. Mr. Paradise presented the following bid for Board approval:

Bid No. 09-16 Bituminous Concrete Paving, Resurfacing and Repair at Herbert Hoover

Bid Amount: \$78,600.00

The Bid is for replacement of bituminous concrete paving on Hoover main driveway and parking areas. Replacement required due to deterioration and pot holes forming from water penetrating the surface. The area needs to be milled and overlaid to make the surface water tight and safe for bus and student traffic.

The Board unanimously approved Bid No. 09-16 and Budget Transfer Report No. 08-5 (Working Copy).

Certified and Support Personnel Reports

Dr. Muenker presented the following for approval:

- Elections of Certified Personnel
- Resignations/Leaves of Certified Personnel
- Elections of Support Personnel
- Resignations/Leaves of Support Personnel
- Sabbatical Leaves of Certified Personnel

Dr. Muenker requested that item number 34 be deleted from the Resignations/Leaves of Certified Personnel.

Dr. Muenker recommended the approval of the personnel report for certified and support personnel.

Mr. Blasch moved the Certified and Support personnel reports be accepted. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion.

Mr. Eccles requested a roll call vote. The roll call tally indicated that the Personnel Report was approved by a vote of eight ayes (Mr. Blasch, Ms. Boyle, Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Eccles, Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. Koziol, Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Webb) and one abstention (Dr. Spitz).

Motion: New Policy #553 – Bullying/Cyberbullying

Ms. Boyle presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the District is committed to providing all students with a safe and civil school environment in which all members of the school community are treated with dignity and respect, and

WHEREAS, in order to keep District Board Policies updated and current, new policies and revisions are recommend by the administration to the Board Policies Committee for review, and

WHEREAS, recommended policies meet the requirements of Federal Law; and

WHEREAS, after review by the Board Policies Committee the district is ready to recommend:

POLICY #553 – BULLYING/CYBERBULLYING

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that said Policy be approved by the Neshaminy Board of School Directors.

Mr. Webb seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

Motion: Approval of the IU Special Education Contracted Services for 2008-09

Mrs. Cummings presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy School District is required by law to provide special education and related services to children from pre-school through age twenty-one; and

WHEREAS, a significant number of our students have severe mental and physical disabilities for which we do not operate programs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approves the contract for special education services with Bucks County Intermediate Unit 22 for the 2008-09 school year.

Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

Motion: Approval of Bucks County Technical High School 2008-09 Budget

Mr. Eccles presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, in order to provide technical high school education for our students, six Lower Bucks County School Districts cooperatively established the Bucks County Technical High School; and

WHEREAS, each participating school district must annually approve the Technical High School's annual budget.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approves the 2008-09 Bucks County Technical High School Budget in the total amount of \$21,648,162 with the Neshaminy School District 2008-09 net fiscal payment to be \$4,048,804.

Mr. Blasch seconded the motion.

Mr. Koziol noted that the Bucks County Technical High School for two years in a row has met the PSSA standards. It is the only technical school in the state that has met same. They received a commendation from the House of Representatives. They have made budget cuts and stayed in line with Act 1. They are making major improvements and they have a five year plan. Union contracts have been settled. Sacrifices have been made by the professionals. Auditorium addition is on time and on budget. Mr. Parks has done a great job. Mr. Koziol will vote yes for the budget.

Mr. Webb commented that the capital improvement fund has \$209,000. Some controversy still exists with regards to the funding of the Tech School. Bristol Township rejected the budget. Mr. Webb would like to see the entire formula be reworked. Mr. Webb would like the formula simplified. The formula cannot be changed without Neshaminy or any of the other districts.

Dr. Spitz noted that every program would need to be examined, not just special education programs.

Mr. Koziol presented a graph to all Board members regarding per student costs for each district participating.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: 2008-09 Proposed School Calendar

Mr. Koutsouradis presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, each year the Board of School Directors must establish an official school calendar for the coming year; and

WHEREAS, the six participating school districts of the Bucks County Technical High School strive to establish a common school calendar; and

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors reviewed the proposed calendar at the April 8, 2008 Public Work Session; and

WHEREAS, the proposed calendar was forwarded for comments to each of the employee bargaining groups.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors adopt the attached school calendar for the 2008-09 school year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors specifically designate Section 1502 holidays: December 24 and 26, 2008; February 16, 2009; and April 9 and 10, 2009 as five official local school district holidays.

Mr. Koziol seconded the motion.

Dr. Spitz questioned Item #3 on the back. Dr. Muenker noted that a change could take place regarding contractual issues.

Mr. Profy advised that the motion could be approved subject to amendment if necessary.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: Approval of New Bank Account with Citizens Bank

Mr. Koziol presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Public School Code requires that the Board of School Directors approve all bank accounts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors authorizes the establishment of a Municipal Savings Account with Citizens Bank in the name of Neshaminy School District, Account No. 6253919858.

Mr. Blasch seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Federal Programs

Mr. Kadri advised that an application has been submitted for the Classroom for the Future's grant.

Future Topics

Mr. Kadri advised that on May 6th an update will be provided on redistricting. A final report will be given on Tawanka, both program and building recommendations. Mr. Kadri would like to see the district strengthen the internal research capabilities within the district. Create the opportunity to understand program effectiveness and student achievement.

Mr. Webb asked whether Mr. Kadri would have a proposed final budget prepared by May 13th. Mr. Paradise advised that same would be prepared.

Other Board Business

Mrs. Cummings presented questions regarding Neshaminy Middle and the possible closure. Community members are requesting a timeline and when will information be provided. Redistricting committee meeting will take place on April 24th at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Kadri noted that the vote taken by the Board to close any facility cannot take place prior to June 16th. The Board can however give an indication to the Administration prior to that time about the plans which are being presented to the Board.

Mrs. Cummings requested a presentation from Reynolds and ATS&R at the next Work Session.

Mr. Webb advised that a cell tower request has been received for the Eisenhower property. Mr. Webb was concerned about community feelings. Income from said tower would be negotiable, but approximately \$23,000 per year. Mr. Paradise noted that in three prior instances the School Board has said no to the cell tower, and then another business will reap the benefits and the proximate vicinity stays the same and the community still needs to see the tower.

There was board consensus to pursue the cell tower issue. Mr. Eccles abstained.

Public Comment

Mr. Marv Dickler, Langhorne, PA, advised that a grandson of a Villages of Flowers Mill resident set a record in Track and Field for Neshaminy High School. Mr. Dickler was happy to so many people at the meeting. The sound system needs to be improved.

Mr. Charles Lauble, Langhorne Manor, PA, stated that taxes have driven people from Neshaminy. Mr. Lauble noted that back 61 years ago politics was not playing a part in the school system. There was a common goal back then. The goal was education. The best education possible in the most cost effective way. There was no politics other than that. Mr. Lauble had great respect for those people. Mr. Lauble feels that his children and grandchildren have not received as good an education. Mr. Lauble wrote a letter concerning school board member traits, wisdom, common sense, honesty and historic knowledge of the system when it was a great system. You need to understand the past. Without wisdom it is like a fatherless child.

Mrs. Maryann Kohler, Langhorne, PA, stated concerns about the acclimation of students and classroom sizes. Mrs. Kohler would like to see the community have a vote in said process. Mrs. Kohler is present to advocate for the children. She feels too much time was spent at this meeting regarding finances and not enough on the needs of the children.

Mr. Kadri ensured that from an Administration standpoint things are moving forward assuming that there will be closures. Student movement is being considered. Census codes are being used to determine student movement. Mr. Kadri defined the steps which are being taken presently.

Board Comment

Dr. Spitz stated that he has seen this evening one of the strongest statements made by citizens regarding politics and the Board in all his years serving on the Board. Issues raised at the prior meeting are not based on personality conflicts, political advantage or pettiness. Concerns are about activities by a member of this board that Dr. Spitz believes raises ethical questions and violated existing board policies. Taking these issues behind closed doors is the source of the problem, not the solution. Behind closed doors is where the undermining of our Superintendent has occurred. It is where the tainted hiring recommendations have been agreed to. It is where secret meetings have been requested and it is where unilateral decisions have been made without Board consensus or knowledge. It is never a bad idea to insist on ethical behavior by Board and Administration. Answers have tried to be gotten behind closed doors too no avail.

Dr. Spitz noted that a six year strategic plan was passed two years ago. Over 60 people, staff, administration, board members and community members were involved during multiple meetings. It was on public display for review for several weeks. A detailed overview was presented publicly at the June 8, 2006 board meeting and was passed unanimously at the June 20, 2006 public meeting. It is available on the district website.

Earlier this year the Superintendent presented to the Board specific plans geared toward raising test scores, improving Neshaminy and creating a stronger visible presence within the district and community all tied into the Strategic Plan.

The demand to define the role of the school board and superintendent is a very legitimate request. A code of ethics and conduct policy exists which partially addresses these issues. "The primary function of the Board is to establish policies by which the schools are to be administered, but the administration of the educational

programming and conduct of school business shall be left to the employed superintendent of schools and his professional and non-professional staff." Follow the already existing policy. Expanded policies and guidelines could be beneficial. Start with the PSBA Standards for Effective School Governments and the PSBA Code of Conduct. They received a letter from PSBA back in November, 2005 asking the Board to commit to these standards. Ten of the other 12 school districts in Bucks County and 440 local educational agencies statewide have approved the standards. Neshaminy is one of only a handful that has not. Dr. Spitz would urge Neshaminy to approve these standards.

Dr. Spitz respectfully requested that the Board Policies Committee review the PSBA documents and make a recommendation to the entire Board.

Individual Board members need to commit themselves to be bound by the policies. This is where the current board is falling short. Dr. Spitz will continue to push in public to do better and live up to the high standards found in those policies.

Mr. Kadri announced that the Work Session will take place on May 6, 2008 and the Public Meeting will take place on May 13, 2008.

Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. O'Connor moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Webb seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls
Board Secretary